[Mr. R. Raman Pillai.]

(*b*) that, by permitting it, the Excise employès save the culprits from prosecution by taking applications from the contractors and not charging them when complaints are made against illicit tapping of trees not marked and numbered?

MR. K. GEORGE (*Chief Secretary to Government*): (*a*) Under Rule 33 of the Tree Tax Rules the preparation of spathes for the drawing of toddy is permitted only after the trees have been applied for and the tree tax in respect of the same is paid.

(*b*) If the tree tax has not been paid, the mere receipt of applications by the Excise employés cannot save from prosecution any one who prepares spathes for the drawing of toddy.

Recovery of tree tax by the Excise Officers.

370. **MR. R. RAMAN PILLAI** (*Kottayam*): Will the Government be pleased to state:

(*a*) whether they are aware that confidential circulars and orders are being issued by the Head of the Department compelling the subordinates to recover a higher amount of tree tax in each half year than that collected in the corresponding previous half year and that the subordinates of those parties wherein the tree tax recovered has fallen are punished; and

(*b*) if they are not aware, whether they will enquire whether such a state of affairs exists?

MR. K. GEORGE (*Chief Secretary to Government*): (*a*) No such orders or circulars are being issued. On the other hand, there is a standing order of the department strictly prohibiting officers from inducing toddy shop licensees in any circumstances to apply for the marking of more trees than are actually required for the shops. The subordinates are punished for a fall in tree tax only when such fall is found to be due to the existence of illicit tapping.

(*b*) In view of the answer to part (*a*), this does not arise.

Acting Officers in the P. W. Department.

371. **MR. R. RAMAN PILLAI** (*Kottayam*): (*a*) Will the Government be pleased to state the present (16-3-1104) number of acting appointments in the Public Works Department, both gazetted and non-gazetted?

(*b*) Are the Government aware that there are many disappointed hands in the department who are unable to get the pay due to them, as their appointments are not permanent?

MR. K. GEORGE (*Chief Secretary to Government*): (*a*) Three gazetted officers and eighty-two non-Gazetted Officers.

(*b*) The Government are not aware.

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